CONCORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

MINUTES

Regular Meeting February 13, 2013 Room, City Hall 41 Green Street, Concord, NH

Attendance:

Members present at the meeting included: Jim Owers; Christopher Morgan; Tracey Boisvert; Pam Hunt; Kris Tardiff; Chris Kane; Gloria McPherson, City Planner and Rebecca Hebert, Senior Planner, attended the meeting.

C. Morgan, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:00.

1. Minutes:

The Commission reviewed the minutes of the January 9, 2013, meeting and the minutes were unanimously accepted.

2. Wetlands Bureau:

R. Hebert said that there were no new wetlands applications to review this month.

3. City Council/Planning Board Action:

a) <u>City Council Referral Regarding Northern Pass's use of PSNH right-of-way through McKenna's Purchase</u> – J. Owers recused himself from the discussion because his law firm represents PSNH. R. Hebert explained that the City Council has referred a communication from the residents at McKenna's Purchase off of Branch Turnpike Road regarding the use of the existing right-of-way through the development for Northern Pass transmission line. The letter was also referred to the Planning Board.

Paul Susca, a resident of McKenna's Purchase, explained that homeowner's association is asking the City to reconsider their position on Northern Pass and the City's preference of using the existing right-of-way. The new towers would be placed very close to building units in McKenna's Purchase and the right-of-way is very narrow where it crosses Loudon Road. He showed photographs of the right-of-way location as it relates to the building units. The right-of-way crosses through the deck attached to one of the units and passes very close to other buildings. The residents are concerned that they will lose the vegetative buffer to the nearby commercial developments. He explained that vegetation would be cleared within the right-of-way and they would lose screening to the power lines and Shaw's plaza. He also said that the McKenna's Purchase development was constructed in 1988.

The Commission discussed Northern Pass and agreed they would need to gain a better understanding of how the City developed its position on the project. Mr. Susca said that he would like to see the new lines buried or placed in the alternate route through broken ground. The group discussed the

recent study on the visual impacts of Northern Pass and said that Concord's impacts were the worst along the corridor.

Mr. Eugene Rudolf also of McKenna's purchase said that he was concerned about the proximity of the new line to the residences. He explained that he was an electrician and understood that the new line would carry 345,000 volts of electricity and the existing line only carries 120,000 volts. He also said he wasn't sure how the project would be able to cross Loudon Road. The group discussed the layout of Northern Pass project through Concord. R. Hebert said that PSNH had originally proposed three possible routes through Concord, including a new right-of-way through East Concord, a route which utilized the existing PSNH right-of-way and a route which primarily used the existing right-of-way but establishing a new right-of-way through the broken ground. The new right-of-way through the broken ground was shown because PSNH was not sure if the FAA would permit the installation of the new towers near the airport. The FAA has indicated that the towers would be approved near the airport and the new right-of-way through broken ground is not needed. The Commission agreed that Northern Pass was not a good project for the state or Concord. The project crosses through several tracts of city-owned open space land including Spears Park, Turtle Pond and the broken ground.

The group also agreed that the new transmission line should stay within the existing right-of-way. C. Morgan offered to write a letter to the Council explaining the Commissions position on the Northern Pass. The group can review the letter at next month's meeting and then submit a response to Council in April. The group also suggested that the right-of-way easements on city-owned land should be reviewed by the Legal Department to make sure the expanded use is permitted. C. Kane said that there was also a rare and endangered grass located under the right-of-way in the vicinity of the McKenna's Purchase.

- b) <u>Triacca property</u> C. Morgan reported that the City Council approved the sale of the Triacca parcel at their January meeting.
- c) <u>Budget</u> R. Hebert reviewed the proposed budget for fiscal year 2014. New items included funding for an intern to assist with the easement monitoring, money for the preparation of an open space plan with a trails/outdoor recreation component. The group discussed whether or not the open space plan should include recreation and whether or not the City should have an updated natural resources inventory prepared first. R. Hebert said that the City has had several special studies prepared over the years including the wildlife habitat study recently prepared by Dan Spurduto and the digital wetland mapping project. The Commission may want to have a consultant pull together all of the information from the various studies for the natural resources inventory and open space plan. This could be included in the proposal.

The group agreed to include the open space plan in the budget and thought that about \$30,000 was appropriate. The item would be included in the Forestry Program budget and paid for through the Forestry Trust. R. Hebert said that the tree program budget was also reduced because the city would not be planting additional trees downtown and most the trees will be removed as a result of the Main Street improvements. Additional money was included in the Conservation Commission budget for an intern or consultant to help with easement monitoring, but overall the funding request operational budget is about the same as last year.

4. Open Space:

J. Owers moved to enter into a nonpublic session for the discussion of possible and acquisitions in accordance with RSA 91-A:3, II(d). T. Boisvert seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Following the discussion, the Commission moved to exit nonpublic session and seal the minutes. The motion was duly seconded and passed unanimously.

5. Easement Stewardship/Monitoring:

There were no updates regarding easement stewardship and monitoring.

6. Other Business:

R. Hebert said that she has talked with the Acidotic Racing Team regarding their proposed event at Winant Park. The event would be staged at the Unitarian Universalist Church and would include approximately 100 to 150 runners. The race course has not been mapped yet, but would only use the "official" trails. The club is fully insured and would be applying for a special event permit from the Code Division. The Commission agreed that the event would okay on trial basis, but did not want to commit to an annual event. R. Hebert said she would also check with the Five Rivers Conservation Trust to make sure there were no conflicts with the conservation easement. The event would be a fund raiser for the Emerson Preschool. The Commission also suggested contacting St. Paul's School.

R. Hebert said that she has received a second request for a road race a Merrill Park. The race event would be permitted through the City's Recreation Department but the course would use a trail at the park that is managed by the Commission. The group did not object to the road race utilizing the trail at Merrill Park.

C. Morgan reminded the group that organization of officers should be placed on next month's agenda.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 PM.

A TRUE RECORD ATTEST: Rebecca Hebert, Senior Planner Secretary pro-tem